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DESERT VOICE



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DESERT VOICE

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On the Cover

Two Hawk missiles are detonated April 13 at Udairi Range as part of a demolition training exercise between U.S. and Kuwaiti EOD technicians.

Photo by Spc. Jonathan Montgomery

Qualifiers for new campaign medals

Story by Eric Cramer
Army News Service

Soldiers can begin putting on the new Iraq and Afghanistan campaign medals. The Department of the Army approved the final implementation rules for them April 8.

Soldiers are eligible for the Afghanistan Campaign Medal if they: served in direct support of Operation Enduring Freedom on or after Oct. 24, 2001 until a future date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense or the cessation of the operation. The area of eligibility includes all the land area of Afghanistan and all the air space above the land.

Soldiers are eligible to receive the Iraq Campaign Medal if they: served in direct support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on or after March 19, 2003, to a future date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense or the cessation of the operation. The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the country of Iraq, the contiguous water area out to 12 nautical miles and all air spaces above them.

Soldiers must serve 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days in either area, or be engaged in combat during their service; be wounded or injured, requiring evacuation

from the area.

The medals replace the former Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

Denise Harris, assistant chief of the policy section, military awards, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, said the currently serving Soldiers need no orders to receive the medals, and that battalion-level commanders generally determine eligibility.

"Typically, the commanders will send a service roster of the award to the personnel center, and it will be included in the Soldiers' records," Harris said. "So the commanders will make the recommendation."

Soldiers who already have the GWOT Expeditionary Medal, for service in Iraq or Afghanistan, may apply for the new medal in lieu of the earlier one, Harris said.

"All they have to do is take their orders to their personnel office, and the personnel center will change the records," she said.

Once a Soldier elects to receive a campaign medal in lieu of the GWOT-E, then the GWOT-E will be removed from the Soldier's records and they will only be authorized to wear the new campaign medal, Harris said.

However, it is possible for a Soldier to wear both the GWOT-E and one of the campaign medals simultaneously. For this to



The new Afghanistan and Iraq campaign medals will be available May 1, but the ribbons are already in the supply chain.

occur, the Soldier must have been deployed to theater on two different occasions to earn the two awards independently, Harris said.

Harris said the ribbons for the new awards are in the supply chain now, but the medals won't be available for issue until May 1.

"For the initial issue, the Soldiers should be able to go to their supply clerks, they shouldn't have to buy them out of their own pockets," Harris said.

New mission for Mich. Mechanics

Story by Spc. Curt Cashour

The 278th Regimental Combat Team will soon be getting some help in its battles with insurgents in Iraq.

But the reinforcements won't come in the form of infantry grunts or explosives experts. Though they'll still be armed and dangerous, the extra troops will be more apt to fix things than blow them up.

The 1071st Maintenance Company, a National Guard unit based at Camp Grayling, Mich., arrived at Camp Buehring April 13. The unit, which is augmented by two platoons from the Oregon National Guard's 3670th Maintenance Company, is training for its deployment to Iraq in the next few weeks.

Once in Iraq, the 1071st will support the 278th by providing maintenance services for a variety of equipment, including track vehicles, construction equipment and electronics, or as 1071st Commander Capt. Jason Teddy puts it, "everything from floor sweepers to M1 tanks."

The high operations tempo, heavy add-on armor kits and harsh environment of Iraq

have taken a toll on many of the vehicles and equipment in theater, and, like the 278th, several of the fighting units serving up north have requested more maintenance support, Teddy said.

Each of the five platoons deploying with the 1071st has a maintenance specialty. In addition to the headquarters platoon, the unit has two wheeled vehicle repair platoons, an armament repair platoon, and a construction equipment repair platoon.

The 1071st normally fills a general support maintenance role, operating out of fixed facilities rebuilding vehicles and equipment. With the 278th, the unit will serve in a direct support role, sending out roving teams composed of mechanics with different specialties to perform smaller-scale repairs, Teddy said.

The new mission won't be a problem for the 1071st, a unit whose ranks are filled with a large number of Soldiers who already have years of maintenance experience working as National Guard equipment technicians in their civilian jobs, said Master Sgt. Walter White, a section sergeant for one of the wheeled vehicle platoons.

"Your E-5 is 25 years old. My E-4 is 40 years old and has 25 years experience," he said, making a comparison between the 1071st and a typical active component maintenance unit.

But not all of the unit's junior-enlisted Soldiers have that much experience. Pfc. Travis Hatfield first learned about this deployment when he was in advanced individual training at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. In fact, the truck mechanic had just one weekend after AIT graduation to pack and get ready for mobilization, he said.

A student at Oregon State University, Pfc. Andrew Wright had to put his schoolwork on hold for this deployment. With his initial disappointment of having to put his education behind him, Wright said he's been thinking a lot about his impending trip to Iraq.

"I know I'm ready, but I don't feel ready at all. Even with all the training, there's no way you can be sure what it's going to be like," he said.

Hatfield has a more positive outlook. "I'm ready to get over there and get it over with," he said. "I've always kind of liked Army stuff."

Get your kicks at Zone 6

Story and photo by Spc. Alex Licea

A simple cut of a red ribbon marked the opening of Kuwait's 13th Army and Air Force Exchange Service Post Exchange at Camp Arifjan's Zone 6, April 13. Also celebrating grand openings were the Zone 6 gym and community center.

These facilities are the latest additions to the camp's Zone 6 as Arifjan continues its improvements and expansion.

Zone 6 will become the main residential area for servicemembers deployed to Arifjan, said 1st Sgt. Randall Maffett, non-commissioned officer in charge of Zone 6. "These new facilities will be a big improvement to our servicemembers' quality of life," he said.

During his opening remarks, Col. Brick T. Miller, Area Support Group-Kuwait commander, welcomed everyone to the event and thanked those individuals who had a hand in the construction and opening of the AAFES complex. Miller closed his comments by telling servicemembers to enjoy the day's festivities.

"I want to thank everyone from the command cell to the [Morale, Welfare and Recreation] staff," said Miller. "Now, let's hear those cash registers."

The location also features a beauty and barbershop, a phone center, an Internet café, dry cleaning and laundry facilities, two gift shops, two jewelry stores and a car and motorcycle sales office. The area's community courtyard features more than 25 bazaar vendors offering servicemembers a chance to purchase an assortment of local market items.

The zone's celebrations began as the sun rose over Kuwait with hundreds of servicemembers participating in a 5K fun run. A disc jockey, prize giveaways and all-day barbecue highlighted the day's activities.

Prior to the opening of these stores, residents living in Arifjan's Zone 6 would have to walk or take a shuttle bus to get to services such as the PX or community center.

For troops like Spc. Melaine Moseley, a Zone 6 resident assigned to the 942nd Transportation Company, the grand opening of the stores was a huge morale booster. "Having these stores here will make it so much more convenient for us," she said.

"It's such a fun atmosphere." Her friend and coworker, Spc. Michael Birt, smiled and agreed with Moseley as they were both waiting in line to enter the more than 11,000 square-foot PX.

Birt is also looking forward to working out



A mad dash begins as runners take off during the beginning of the Zone 6 5K fun run, April 13. The run kicked off the day's festivities.

in the new gym with all of its new equipment, he said. The gym offers free and stationary weights, a half-court basketball court and a designated space for aerobic and spinning classes.

The community center has a large game room, social rooms, a video checkout center, a movie room and an Internet café with 25 computers. Zone 6 also has two full-court outdoor basketball and volleyball courts.

AAFES plans to open the Zone 6 food court next month. The court will feature establishments like Hardee's, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Subway and Charlie's Grilled Subs.

Permanent residents can also expect to be moving into hard structures replacing the tents they once called home.

Each of the pre-cast billets can house 58 people, Maffett said. The tents will continue to be used for those troops who are redeploying back to the United States or are only at the camp for a short period.

"We have already completed 60 billets and expect to construct another 75 by the beginning of August giving us a total of 135," he said. "We will start to move Arifjan-based troops living in the tents sometime next month."

The billets in Zone 1 and building 507 in Zone 2 will continue to house permanent troops stationed at Arifjan.

Nine shuttle stops surround Zone 6, giving servicemembers there the opportunity to travel among the camp's three sections.

Other improvements, such as the expansion of the zone's dining facility and the installation of latrine units, will continue during the month of April, but Zone 6 officials urge its residents to be patient. "We will just have to go through some growing pains," Maffett said.

Zone 1 will continue its normal day-to-day operations. However, Zone 2 will begin to serve as a storage area as Arifjan begins to take on most of the functions and materials of Camp Doha, which is scheduled to close.

The Zone 6 community center hours will be from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, and its fitness center will operate from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. The Zone 6 PX will operate from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Correction

In our April 13 issue we erroneously stated that Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith was the first Medal of Honor recipient since the Vietnam War. In fact, he was the third Medal of Honor recipient since the Vietnam War. In 1993, Master Sgt. Gary I. Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall D. Shughart were each awarded a Medal of Honor for actions above and beyond the call of duty on Oct. 3, 1993, while serving as Sniper Team Members for the Army Special Operations Command with Task Force Ranger in Mogadishu, Somalia.



A memorial April 9 at Camp Arifjan was held in remembrance of the 16 KBR Transportation Mission Drivers killed in action between 2003 and 2004.

KBR remembers the fallen

Story and photo by Spc. Jonathan Montgomery

It was a solemn occasion accompanied, fittingly, by a gentle nighttime breeze. Sixteen silhouettes dressed in black flak vests and helmets formed the perimeter of a huge granite rock taken from the remnants of an Iraqi fortified bunker destroyed by American and Coalition forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The rock served as a memorial dedication April 9 at Camp Arifjan to the 16 KBR Theater Transportation Mission Drivers killed in action between 2003 and 2004. One is still missing in action.

"These men were tough, independent, brave, self-starters," said Eddie Johns, TTM project manager, Task Order 43. "These were get-it-done kind of guys who came from all over the U.S. and Pakistan."

The ceremony, however, wasn't representative of all KBR employees who had made the ultimate sacrifice. Sixty-two KBR workers have died since the war began in March 2003, said Johns.

The April 9 dedication marked the first anniversary of an attack that killed several KBR truckers and several troops in an ambush in Iraq. All of the 122 KBR convoys operating in Iraq that day were attacked, Johns said.

Chad Briggs, a flatbed truck driver from March 2004 until the April 9 tragedy, said the day started out like any other morning

until the convoy commander came in and told them to stay put. "Everybody that day, whether going in or coming out, was getting hit," he said.

The trek along Iraq's main supply routes remains a perilous journey. Up to 1,000 trucks a day travel from Kuwait to various Forward Operating Bases in Iraq, delivering fuel, mail, ice and other vital supplies. "Looking back on some of this stuff, I always said a prayer and made my peace with God. I mean, it was really bad, and I

was really lucky," said Briggs.

The guests in attendance spoke of the audacity these men portrayed by risking their lives on a daily basis with entry into a hostile area of operations. "These people do most things most people won't do ... push fuel, food, supplies and vehicles up north," said Remo Butler, TTM project manager for Kuwait and Iraq. "We could have another April 9, but these truckers are driving on."

Brig. Gen. William Johnson, commanding general of the 143rd Transportation Command, said movement control teams have continued to be a shared part of the military family. "I and my Soldiers treat all of the civilians as Soldiers," he said. "We grieve equally." Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb, Third U.S. Army/Coalition Forces Land Component Command commanding general, added to Johnson's remarks by discussing the important role "our Soldiers in slacks" are playing in the global war on terrorism, traveling a distance comparable to driving from Wilmington, N.C., to Canton, Ohio — 480 miles roundtrip. "The supplies you deliver allow that young Soldier to knock down that door in Ramadi at two in the morning," he said.

The ceremony closed with a British version of "Taps" played on Scottish bagpipes, the unveiling of the "Cornerstone of Transportation" rock, and a reading of the names of the 16 men who lost their lives, as well as the one person still missing in action.

William E. Bradley — Galveston Texas ■ Fred H. Bryant Lexington — S.C. ■ Albert L. Cayton — Pensacola, Fla. ■ Jody W. Deatherage — Llano, Texas ■ Steven S. Fisher — Virginia Beach, Va. ■ Robert V. Gaston — Lampassas, Texas ■ Tony D. Johnson — Riverside, Calif. ■ Steven F. Hulett — Manistee, Mich. ■ Jack A. Montague — Pittsburg, Ill. ■ Jeffrey L. Parker — Lake Charles, La. ■ Timothy H. Smith — Ignacio, Colo. ■ Walter Zbryski — Montverde, Fla. ■ James Wingate — Monticello, Ga. ■ Roger E. Moffett — Freeport, Fla. ■ Mohammed Hayat — Pakistan ■ Singh Tarlochan — Pakistan ■ Missing in Action: Timothy Bell



Two Hawk missiles once used by Kuwait during the Gulf War are detonated. Members of the 319th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) worked with Kuwait air force EOD techs during a weeklong training exercise April 13 at Udairi Range.

Going out with a bang

Story and photos by Spc. Jonathan Montgomery

There really isn't anything that can explain the shock-and-awe sensation of 1,000 lbs. of Czech missile fragments flying hundreds of meters in every direction, including yours.

The sonic rupture created by the munitions blast sends an unpleasant pulse into



Kuwaiti air force members learn how to safely handle detonation wire.

your chest cavity and straight down your knees until, like lighting, the volatile vibration ravaging your entire body is finally rounded by the sand hill you were half-hiding behind when the detonator screamed "fire in the hole!" three times over.

This live training demonstration brought U.S. and Kuwaiti Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians together for the first time in recent history to train on explosive demolition techniques, tactics and procedures April 13 at Udairi Range.

The cooperation for this U.S.-led demolition training exercise all started when the Kuwaiti air force requested help in destroying more than 60 missiles from their own arsenal that had become unstable due to such factors as bad propellants and corrosion.

"The reliability starts dropping with old age," said Sgt. Deanna Miley of the 319th Ordnance Company (EOD), a National Guard unit out of Tacoma, Wash.

In preparation for the live training demon-

stration, U.S. Army EOD technicians gave Kuwait air force EOD technicians a week-long training course at Mubarak Air Base. The training covered field preparation lessons on missile basics, explosive theory, initiation systems and demolition setups so that the Kuwaitis, in turn, would know how to safely dispose of unusable stockpiles of missiles and other munitions in the future.

"The intent of the course was to give Kuwaitis an idea on how to coat and destroy different types of ammunition," said Capt. Aaron Newcomer, U.S.-Kuwaiti EOD liaison for the explosive training course.

Although the Kuwait air force has undergone other types of U.S. training on things like Apache helicopters and medical techniques, EOD training hasn't been taught since the Gulf War, said Newcomer. "This is the first big [EOD] project we've done with the Kuwaitis," he said. "It's a good refresher for the Kuwaitis. A lot of them don't get a chance to do this training."

Participating members of the Kuwaiti air

force EOD – ranking from private to lieutenant colonel – agreed.

“[The training] is an excellent proof of our skills,” said Lt. Col. Fahad Al Watri. “For a long time, Kuwaitis have not had a lot of training. We like the friendship and need the experience.”

“We’ve been introduced to a few more new systems,” said Sgt. Faisal Alanaizi.

“The training is very, very useful,” said 1st Sgt. Jasem Mohammed Ashkanani.

“Many things we did not know we are now learning. We really hope this cooperation keeps going on.”

After practicing with missile mock ups, crater charges and blasting caps for several days prior, the Kuwaiti EOD techs traveled north to Udairi Range April 13 to undergo the real thing: two Hawk missiles, the same type used by Kuwait during the Gulf War to bring down more than 20 Iraqi planes.

The munitions awaiting destruction were lowered into a six-foot sand crater to reduce airborne fragmentation and to control the blast radius.

And because it was the final day of training, the onus rested on the Kuwaitis to properly tape the charges onto the bad missiles, spool the detonation wire, to bury the blasting cap and arm the receiver. “It’s important that the Kuwaitis, not the

Americans, are the ones doing everything ... we are the safety advisors,” said Capt. Mike Slevin of the 319th. “They’ve gone through the training, and now it is graduation day and the captain is the dean!”

The Kuwaitis, he said, performed remarkably well setting charges and preparing demolitions for the 1,000 lbs. of missile.

“They’ve been a really good bunch who’ve worked very hard,” said Slevin.

Working hard meant asking lots of questions pertaining to the range’s live explosive training exercise, he said. Kuwaiti EOD techs, for example, wanted to know why “this” detonated with “that,” which button to press first, and other technical questions like how the temperature of the ground affected the blasting caps when they were buried in the hot sand. “Normally, we put [the blasting cap] under a sandbag, but since the whole country is sand ...” Slevin said jokingly.

The 319th instructed the Kuwaitis on the proper amount and placement of the charges. “If you don’t use enough [charges], then you won’t destroy the missile and could leave the propellant intact,” said Slevin. “It’s better to use too much explosive overkill than to undercut it.”

Altogether, the range training has made the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship even stronger,

said Newcomer. “It helps on the individual level by letting each soldier see the differences and similarities between cultures and training operations,” he said. “It also helps to meld the two countries and to keep their relationship fresh. If you don’t communicate, then you don’t bond.”

At the end of the exercise, the Kuwaitis presented the 319th with glass plaques, books and other gifts to show their appreciation for the training they received.

A couple of days after the April 13 missile-detonation exercise, the Kuwait air force EOD went back to Udairi Range to observe the 319th helping members of the 80th Ordnance Battalion destroy roughly 45 tons of ammunition.

Before teaching the Kuwait air force, the 319th was busy working with a Dutch ammunition group in getting rid of their Code-H, or unserviceable, munitions. “Code-H means fun because we get to blow it up,” said Slevin.

In addition to Kuwait, the 319th also plays an active role in Iraq, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, assisting in taking care of unexploded ordnances, improvised explosive devices and other dangerous armaments. Back home, EOD techs join forces with the U.S. Secret Service helping out with such things as presidential election security.



Clockwise from left: A member of the Kuwait air force EOD tapes down a charge to a Hawk missile April 13 at Udairi Range. Capt. Mike Slevin of the 319th Ordnance Company (EOD) looks on as Kuwaitis spool detonation wire. A Hawk missile is lowered into a six foot sand crater before being destroyed because the pit reduces flying fragmentation and controls the blast radius.

Albania nearly doubles support

Story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

After living free from Soviet oppression for more than a decade, the Albanian army is fighting to bring the same lasting peace and basic freedoms to Iraq, committing nearly double the number of troops it did the last time around.

The Albanian army is sending their fifth wave of troops for a six-month rotation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, since joining the coalition in April 2003.

The Albanian Commando Regiment arrived in Kuwait April 10 and expected to leave Camp Virginia for Iraq any day.

This rotation is nearly double the size of the previous deployments, increasing from approximately 70 soldiers to about 120 soldiers.

"By increasing our forces, we will be able to bring help to the Iraqis with the help of other countries," said Albanian army Maj. Luan Domi, commander of the deploying commando regiment.

Albania's increase comes while other members of the coalition are dropping out. Ukraine, Italy and the Netherlands are in the process of permanently redeploying their troops and about 14 countries have completely pulled out of Iraq since the March 2003 invasion.

During their 6-month mission the commando regiment will be working with American forces covering an area in Mosul. The troops will be taking the mission from the Albanian troops rotating out. For the most part, the Albanians go on patrols, man checkpoints for both vehicles and people, do some force protection missions for the camps, and escort VIPs inside the camps,

Albanian facts

Tirana is the capital of Albania, and it was founded in 1614.

Albania has a population of about 3.5 million people, 70 percent of which are Muslim.

Islam was introduced to the Albanians when they were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

Albania's land is mostly mountainous with small plains along the coast.

Albania exports about 400 tons of live and frozen frogs every year, mostly to France and Italy.

John Belushi, Animal House's Bluto, was an ethnic Albanian. His father Adam Belushi emigrated from Albania to the U.S. in 1934.



Albanian soldiers practice patrol maneuvers during their time waiting in Camp Virginia before they move into Iraq. This is the fifth and largest rotation of Albanian troops for OIF.

Domi said.

The troops are confident with the mission they are about to take over, and "it is a great honor for us to participate," Domi said.

All of the troops volunteered for the Iraq deployment. Although this is the first visit to Iraq for the soldiers, many of them have deployed to Afghanistan and rotated through Bosnian peace keeping missions, Domi said. The troops also prepared before they left Albania by participating in joint training exercises with American Special Forces troops. "[We are] bringing the most prepared troops in Albania, for this kind of combat," Domi said.

To keep on their toes and make the final adjustment to the temperature, the Albanians squeezed in some last-minute patrol training in Kuwait. Also, "it's a good way to kill time," said Albanian army 1st Lt. Shkelqim Llagaci.

The troops are looking forward to starting their mission, Domi said. Over the course of the previous rotations the Albanians have built up a relationship with the Iraqis based on mutual respect, a relationship his troops hope to maintain.

Cultivating the Albanian-Iraqi relationship came with some cultural similarities between the two countries.

Albania is one of the only European countries where the majority of the population is Muslim, about 70 percent.

"Being Muslim is a plus [for the

Albanians] because we know the mannerisms – the way [the Iraqis] think because of our religion," Llagaci said.

More than just the religion, Albanians lived for more than four decades under the communist tyranny of the powerful Soviet Union until the regime fell in the early 1990s. Now they've finally received their freedoms, and they are ready to help liberate another population from oppression.

"We have suffered for freedom, so we are ready to sacrifice for others' freedom," Domi said.

When Albania declared independence from the communist regime and the Soviet Union, Llagaci was only 14 years old. He said the difference it made to him, even at that age, was a sizeable one.

When under the communist rule, if anyone said their opinion against the regime there would be trouble for that person or their father, he said. No one could say anything against the regime that wasn't the company line, but now that Albania is independent they can express any opinion they want.

Albania's democracy is still relatively new, and many of the soldiers in this rotation are old enough to remember growing up and living under communism. Now those soldiers of a formerly oppressed nation, are helping Iraqis safely put together their foundations to build their society and budding democracy.

New York no more

Story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

Barren, dusty and, well, barren, Camp New York was never a showcase for the latest creature comforts and innovations in deployed living conditions.

Nevertheless, the camp played a vital role in the most recent troop rotation for Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving as a military bed and breakfast for more than 20,000 troops making their way to or from Iraq.

With the latest OIF surge complete, the camp is due to close its entry control point for the last time April 24 in the interest of cost effectiveness. Now the 170-or-so Soldiers charged with keeping New York up and running are focusing their efforts on tearing the camp down in preparation for a June turnover of the land to the Kuwaiti government.

For the past four months, roughly 35 Soldiers from the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the

206th Engineer Battalion, a National Guard unit from Harrodsburg, Ky., have run New York's command cell. Originally tasked with a rear operations mission at Camp Arifjan, HHC Soldiers didn't find out about the New York mission until they arrived in Kuwait last December, said Maj. Andrew Morrow, New York's executive officer.

The new tasking meant HHC leaders had to reorganize the unit in order to better suit the needs of the mission. But the process was a quick one thanks to the wide range of experiences the unit's Soldiers possessed. It was the first of a number of times the varied skills of the unit came in handy, said Lt. Col. Jeff Brown, camp commander. "You could just say what you needed to be done, and there were two or three people who had already done it before," Brown said.

Shortly after a four-day crash course in



Perched on what is left of a tent pad, contract worker Hamad Fathi Sman disassembles electrical outlets at Camp New York April 14. The camp will close for good April 24.

camp operations in late December, the first transient Soldiers began to trickle into the camp. By Jan. 21, the number of transient troops had ballooned to 9,000. Eventually, the camp topped out at more than 10,000 troops.

Requests for everything from meals ready to eat to fuel to copy machines would come in, sometimes in the middle of the night. But the unexpected nature of the job kept things interesting, said Capt. Steve Vetrano, the camp's support operations officer.

"We never knew what the next request would be. We didn't immediately know how to solve it, but we did," Vetrano

said.

It's this dedication to the mission that Brown feels is the support team's biggest accomplishment. "The bottom line is our job [was] to get units to Iraq and back home. We didn't want to be a stumbling block in either direction," he said.

"It was a learning process because it was a new mission for us, and we got better at it as we went," Morrow said.

Though the camp was technically run by HHC Soldiers, troops from many other units served on the support staff and were crucial to New York's success, Morrow said.

B Company of the 1-172nd Armor Battalion provided security for the camp, two Navy units, Expeditionary Medical Facilities Portsmouth and Dallas, teamed up to run the camp's troop medical clinic, eight members of the 159th finance detachment

handled the camp's money matters and two signal companies, A Company, from the 319th Signal Battalion, and A Company, from the 63rd Signal Battalion, kept the camp's communication infrastructure up and running, Morrow said.

The camp was home to support staff for four months, so for some Soldiers, tearing down everything they worked so hard to maintain comes with mixed emotions.

"In some respects, wherever you live becomes home," said Morrow. "A lot of people that live in hardened structures at some of the other camps kind of look at this place as being backwoods. We kind of enjoyed it," he said.

Although it lacked the amenities of some of Kuwait's more developed camps, living at New York did have its advantages. HHC staff knew nearly all the support staff at the camp and New York's relative isolation meant that leaders and Soldiers didn't have to deal with many rules and regulations from higher headquarters, Morrow said.

"We always felt like we got to control our own world," Vetrano said.

Although he had fun getting to know other New York-based Soldiers during Sunday sports contests, Sgt. 1st Class Jose Villegas, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 159th, said the camp's closing won't affect him much. "A mission is a mission," he said.

All of New York's Soldiers will have moved to various other camps by the end of April. Soldiers from HHC will then prepare for their next mission: setting up and maintaining the command cell for the Aerial Point of Debarkation when it moves to Ali Al-Salem Air Base. The move is tentatively scheduled for mid to late May, Vetrano said.

"In some respects, wherever you live becomes home." - Maj. Andrew Morrow

Financial problems? Maybe not

Story by Sgt. Matt Millham

While serving overseas, troops oftentimes find themselves in legal or financial trouble. Whether their woes began before hopping the pond or after, they don't have to worry about their good names being ruined in their absence.

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, passed in 2003 to update the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act, provides sweeping protections for troops having trouble with rent, taxes, insurance, credit and other issues.

The act covers individuals entering the military, those called to active duty and deployed servicemembers. The SCRA delays or suspends some civil obligations so that servicemembers aren't distracted from their mission and their families aren't left with financial or legal troubles during deployments. Many of the act's provisions only apply to contracts, agreements and loans that were entered into prior to entering active military service.

One of the most-used provisions of the act caps interest on debts at 6 percent per year during active military service. The rewritten act goes further still by stating that the portion of interest above 6 percent is permanently forgiven and cannot be collected once the servicemember leaves active duty. Additionally, monthly payments are also reduced by the amount of interest saved during a servicemember's active duty.

A number of requirements must be met to

qualify for a reduced interest rate. First, the loan has to have been taken out before the servicemember entered active service.

Then, the troop must be able to show that they make less money in the military than they did as a civilian. Troops also have to notify the lender of their entrance into active duty – the lenders cannot lower the rate if they aren't informed of a servicemember's active status.

While this provision remains largely unchanged from the previous version of the law, there are many new provisions that even some courts aren't up to speed on yet. For deployed servicemembers, the new provisions could relieve a lot of headaches – especially ones that could land a troop's family on the street.

One such provision protects deployed servicemembers' dependents from eviction. If a servicemember's family rents a house or apartment to live in, and the rent does not exceed \$2,400 per month, the landlord has to get a court order before the family can be evicted. This provision applies regardless of whether the property was rented before or after entry into the military.

This provision does not allow servicemembers to avoid paying rent, but it does protect them from eviction if their deployment results in a reduction in income that

prevents them from being able to afford their rent.

The act also prevents foreclosures on mortgages as long as a number of criteria are met, including, among other things, that the mortgage originated prior to entry into active service and that the servicemember's ability to pay the mortgage has been affected by their deployment.

If, for some reason, a servicemember ends up in a legal dispute, another provision of the act can further aid in keeping the troop out of trouble.

"The SCRA includes a provision that protects against default judgment," said Army Col. Christopher Garcia, director of legal

policy at the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. "In any civil action, such as a lawsuit or a foreclosure in which

If a lawsuit is brought against a deployed servicemember, "then the SCRA requires the judge to do things to protect the servicemember's rights." - Col. Christopher Garcia

the defendant does not make an appearance, the court must require the plaintiff bringing the suit to file an affidavit saying whether or not the other party in the lawsuit is a servicemember."

If a lawsuit is brought against a deployed servicemember, "then the SCRA requires the judge to do certain things to protect the servicemember's rights," said Garcia.

In all such cases, the judge is required to stay court proceedings for a minimum of 90 days so that the servicemember can present a defense. Usually, such cases are delayed until the servicemember returns from their deployment, Garcia said.

There have been some cases where lending institutions, landlords or even courts have failed to comply with the relatively new law, but Garcia insisted these cases are "isolated" and usually come about "when a lender or landlord or other person dealing with a servicemember is unaware of the law."

All active, Reserve and Guard troops on active duty can contact their local military legal assistance officers to assist them in enforcing SCRA-specified rights and for more information on those rights.

For more information, contact your local Judge Advocate General's office or go online to www.jagcnet.army.mil and click on the Legal Assistance link.

Editor's note: This story contains information gathered from Military.com and an American Forces Press Service story by Gerry J. Gilmore.



Photo by Master Sgt. Hak Haskins

Top Marine visits

Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Michael W. Hagee talks to Cpl. Cesar Hidalgo at Ali Al Salem Air Base, April 4. According to the Marine Forces Central Command - Kuwait administrative clerk, meeting the Commandant is a highlight in his career. The Commandant and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps spent their time talking to the MARCENT Coordination Element - Kuwait Marines before continuing their trip to Iraq.

Community

happenings for April 20 through April 27

Arifjan

Wednesday

Arifjan Boxing Team, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 gym
Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center
Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR facility
Legs, butts and guts, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and flex 8 a.m., Step Aerobics, 1 p.m., Circuit weight training, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

Thursday

Country Music Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center
Open Mic Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR facility
Basketball signups begin, Zone 1 gym
Cardio kickboxing, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and Flex, 8 a.m. Circuit Weight Training, Zone 2 gym

Friday

Arifjan Boxing Team, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 gym
Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Interval training, 5:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Zone 1 gym

Saturday

R&B Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR facility
Texas Hold 'em Poker, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center
Circuit weight training, 5:30 a.m., 8 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool

Sunday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Cardio kickboxing, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and Flex, 8 a.m., Circuit Weight Training, 1 p.m., Step Aerobics, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

Monday

Arifjan Boxing Team, 7:30 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent
Black Jack Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 stage
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Legs, butts and guts, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and flex 8 a.m., Step Aerobics, 1 p.m., Circuit weight training, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

Tuesday

Poetry Night Contest, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Cardio kickboxing, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and Flex, 8 a.m., Circuit Weight Training, 1 p.m., Step Aerobics, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

Wednesday

Arifjan Boxing Team, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 gym
Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Zone 1 Community Center
Legs, butts and guts, 5:30 a.m., Stretch and flex 8 a.m., Step Aerobics, 1 p.m., Circuit weight training, 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym

For more information call 430-1202

Buehring

Wednesday

Walking Club, 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole
Aerobics, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., Tent 4

Thursday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR Tent #1
Country Night, 9:30 p.m., Tent #1

Friday

Walking Club, 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole
Massage Therapy, 9 a.m., MWR tent #4

Saturday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR tent 1

Sunday

Walking Club, 7:30 a.m., command cell flagpole

Monday

Walking Club, 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole
Aerobics, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., MWR tent 4

Tuesday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR tent 1

Wednesday

Walking Club, 5:30 a.m., command cell flagpole
Aerobics, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., MWR tent 4

For more information call 828-1340

Doha

For more information call 438-5637

Kuwaiti Naval Base

For more information call 839-1063

Navistar

Wednesday

Pool Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent
Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., MWR game tent

Thursday

Pool Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent
Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court
Softball Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., Softball field

Friday

Pool Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., MWR game tent

Saturday

Pool Tournament, 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent

Sunday

Pool Tournament, 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent

Monday

Pool Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., MWR game tent
Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

Tuesday

Pool Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent
Smoking cessation classes, 10 a.m., Rec. tent
Education/Awareness/Prevention, 1 p.m., Rec. tent
Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

Wednesday

Pool Tournament practice, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., MWR game tent
Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., Game tent

For more information call 844-1137

Spearhead/SPOD

Thursday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Tent T-32

Friday

Movie Night, 8 p.m., Outdoor Movie Theater

Saturday

Movie Night, 8 p.m., Outdoor Movie Theater

Monday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

For more information call 825-1302

Victory

Wednesday

Basketball practice, 6 p.m. (Call for info)

Friday

Basketball practice, 6 p.m. (Call for info)

Monday

Basketball practice, 6 p.m. (Call for info)

Tuesday

Movie Night, 8 p.m. (Call for info)

Wednesday

Basketball practice, 6 p.m. (Call for info)

For more information call 823-1033

Virginia

Wednesday

Country Western Contest, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Thursday

Spades Tournament, 7 p.m., Dusty Room
Karaoke Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Friday

Earth Day 5K run, 3 p.m., Dusty Room
Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Saturday

Spa Day, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., MWR tent
Hip Hop and R&B Night Contest, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Sunday

Foosball Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent
Old School Jams Contest, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Monday

Ping Pong Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent
Movie Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Tuesday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Wednesday

Country Western Night Contest, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

For more information call 832-1045

Doha/Arifjan Shuttle Schedule

Departs Doha Stop 1*	Arrives Doha Stop 2*	Departs Doha Stop 2*	Arrives Arifjan	Departs Arifjan	Arrives Doha
				0545	
	0700	0715	0830	0845	1000
1015	1025	1040	1200	1300	1430
1445	1450	1505	1615	1630	1745
1900	1910	1925	2045		

* Stop 1 is behind the Building 6 PAX Tent
Stop 2 is between Buildings 28 and 31

Are you holding an event you'd like to see listed in the Desert Voice?

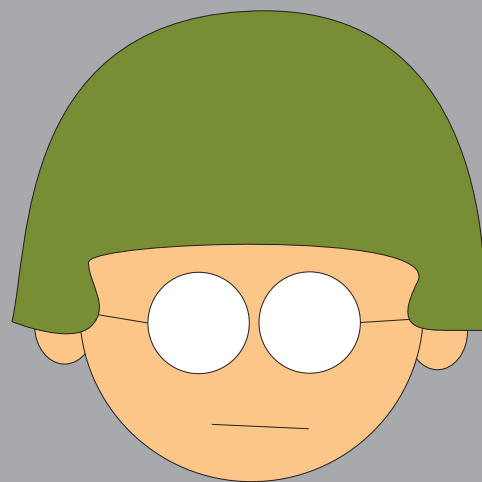
send your event listings to the Desert Voice editor at the e-mail address listed on the back page of this issue.

160th Signal's Colors come home



Courtesy photo

Col. John A. Wilcox, commander of the 160th Signal Brigade and Command Sgt. Maj. Ray D. Lane, command sergeant major of the 160th Signal Brigade, unveil the colors of the 160th Signal Brigade during a repatriation ceremony April 7. The 160th was reactivated for the fourth time at Camp Arifjan, October 2003. Until then, the 160th had been deactivated since August 23, 1991, and its colors were being stored in a museum at the 5th Signal Command headquarters in Germany. "It is with great honor I bring your colors home," said Command Sgt. Maj. Donna Mitchell, command sergeant major of the 5th Signal Command, in her remarks at the April 7 ceremony.



ARMY LIFE

By Lt. Col. Michael Verrett, CFLCC C4

Send your
submissions to:

**DESERT
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